

Message Text

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 IO-12 CU-04 NIC-01 SAJ-01

ACDA-19 RSR-01 OMB-01 /117 W

----- 022009

O 261455 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5788

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL ZAGREB UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BELGRADE 1263

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR YO

SUBJECT: EMBASSY EVALUATION OF CURRENT PRESS CAMPAIGN

REF: BELGRADE 1227 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: CAMP COUNSELOR INCIDENT REPRESENTED RIGHT TARGET AT RIGHT TIME FOR THOSE IN PARTY, YOUTH AND MEDIA AREA. IDEOLOGICAL TIGHTENING UP, ATTEMPT BY PART TO REGAIN PRE-DOMINANT ROLE, AND ELEMENTS OF XENOPHOBIA (ESPECIALLY FEAR OF WESTERN INFLUENCES ON YOUTH) PRESENT IN YUGOSLAV LEADERSHIP MADE EXPLOITATION OF CAMP COUNSELOR INCIDENT INEVITABLE ONCE IT CAME TO ATTENTION OF THOSE IN PART AND SOCIAL/ POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS ASTUTE ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE OPPORTUNITY. IN PARALLEL EFFORT, GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN BACKED OFF FROM VOA CHARGE BUT SHIFTED ATTACK TO US DOMESTIC RADIO STATIONS AND LINKED THEM WITH CAMP COUNSELOR INCIDENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONFLUENCE OF SEVERAL RELATED FORCES IN TRANSITIONAL AND FLUID POLITICAL SITUATION HAS RESULTED IN WHAT HAS BECOME RASH OF ANTI- AMERICAN PUBLICITY OVER PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. SOME OF THESE FORCES ARE SIMPLE AND BASIC, OTHER ARE COMPLEX, BUT THEY HAVE COMPLEMENTED AND REINFORCED

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ONE ANOTHER IN MANNER WHICH HAS PRODUCED PRESENT SITUATION.

3. THE WHOLE DIRECTION OF CHANGES IN YUGOSLAVIA'S POLITICAL SPECTRUM SINCE INITIAL SHOCK OF NATIONALITY CRISIS IN CROATIA IN LATE 1971 HAS BEEN TOWARD TIGHER DISCIPLINE IN PARTY AND SOCIAL/ POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS, WITH ATTEMPTED REINSTITUTION OF PARTY'S COMMANDING POSITION IN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF YUGOSLAV SOCIETY. IN PROCESS, LEADERSHIP - TO ITS DISCOMFITURE - HAS FINALLY ACKNOWLEDGED WHAT HAS BEEN OBVIOUS TO OTHERS - I. E., PARTY HAS BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN MAINTAINING MEANINGFUL ROLE IN LIVES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE AND MOST NOTABLY IN MOTIVATING YOUNG PEOPLE, WHO MORE AND MORE HAVE TURNED TOWARD MATERIALISTIC (READ " BOURGEOIS WESTERN") VALUES.

4. RESPONSE HAS BEEN TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO RETURN TO PURE ETHIC, PARTISAN ELAN OF OLD - LED BY TITO HIMSELF. AND IN SERIES OF SPEECHES AND INTERVIEWS SINCE LAST SEPTEMBER, HE HAS OFTEN EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH CURRENT STATE OF YUGOSLAV SOCIETY BY TURNING SCORN AND ANGER ON THOSE " DECADENT" WESTERN VALUES WHICH HE SEES AS THREATENING BUILDING OF SOCIALISM IN HIS COUNTRY. AND THERE IS A STRIDENCY TO WHAT TITO SAYS WHICH PROBABLY STEMS FROM REALIZATION THAT TIME IS SHORT AND PATH LONG WHICH LEADS TO OBJECTIVES HE WOULD LIKE TO ATTAIN BEFORE LEAVING SCENE. TITO AND HIS LIEUTENANTS ARE CONVINCED THAT ONLY LCY CAN HOLD TOGETHER ALL DIVERSE ELEMENTS OF YUGOSLAV BODY POLITIC IN CRITICAL POST- TITO YEARS. THEY ARE PRESENTLY ENGAGED IN KNOCKING LCY INTO BETTER SHAPE, AS THEY SEE IT. FOR ITS FUTURE RESPONSIBILITIES.

5. ONE OF MOST DIRECT WAYS TO ATTACK " DECADENT" VALUES WHICH THREATEN FROM WITHOUT AND CORRUPT YOUTH OF COUNTRY IS TO HAVE A GO AT PRIMARY PURVEYOR OF THESE VALUES, USA. AND, PARADOXIALLY, THIS IS SEEN AS RELATIVELY SAFE BECAUSE, AS TITO HIMSELF POINTED OUT IN IMPORTANT INTERVIEW LAST MONTH (TO VJESNIK; BELGRADE 0795) " WE HAVE CRITICIZED THEM (AMERICANS) OPENLY, AND THEY HAVE SHOWN UNDERSTANDING FOR OUR STAND, I. E., THEY HAVE NEVER MADE AN ISSUE OF IT." (WHILE THIS WAS WITH REFERENCE TO U. S. FOREIGN POLICY, OBSERVATION HAS VALIDITY ELSEWHERE).

6. THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN IN TITO'S YUGOSLAVIA - AS IS
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TRADITIONALLY CASE IN COMMUNIST SOCIETIES - TENDENCY TO

FIND SCAPEGOATS ABROAD FOR DOMESTIC ILLS. FURTHERMORE, PARTY/ STATE APPARATUS REFLECTS IN ITS OUTLOOK CONSIDERABLE UNEASINESS OVER INFLUENCE ON CITIZENRY OF PRESENCE AND ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGNERS IN YUGOSLAVIA AT ANY TIME - A DEGREE OF XENOPHOBIA, IF YOU WILL. THIS OF COURSE INCREASES ENORMOUSLY AT TIME OF REAL INTERNAL PRESSURES ON REGIME, WHICH WE ARE SEEING NOW.

7. INEVITABLY, WHEN OPEN SEASON HAS BEEN DECLARED ON PARTICULAR OBJECT OF CRITICISM, OPPORTUNISTS AND SEEKERS OF EASY AND TIMELY APPROBATION RUSH TO FORE, REINFORCING BOTH NATURE AND LEVEL OF SUCH CRITICISM. THIS APPEARS TO BE HAPPENING NOW. TO ATTACK SUPPOSEDLY HOSTILE WESTERN (ESPECIALLY US) INFLUENCES IS NOT ONLY SAFE AND ACCEPTABLE, BUT ACTUALLY PRAISE-WORTHY. IN THIS CLIMATE IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT CERTAIN ELEMENTS IN SLOVENIA, WHICH HAVE BEEN UNDER PRESSURE FROM TITO ADVISERS FOR TOO- CLOSE LINKS WITH WEST, FOUND FERTILE GROUND IN CAMP COUNSELOR PROGRAM (AND INTERVIEWS) WHICH, IN ADDITION TO ELEMENT OF EXPOSURE TO WESTERN VALUES, ALSO INVOLVES INFLUENCING OF YOUTH. THIS READY- MADE ISSUE PROVED TO BE TOO GOOD NOT TO BECOME SUBJECT OF AN ESCALATING SPIRAL OF PUBLICITY AS SUCCESSIVE LAYERS OF YOUTH BUREAUCRATS, PARTY POLITICIANS AND MEDIA PEOPLE HAVE SEEN IN IT MEANS OF PROVING THEMSELVES TO BE ON RIGHT SIDE OF TOPICAL ISSUE.

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PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 IO-12 CU-04 NIC-01 SAJ-01

ACDA-19 OMB-01 RSR-01 /117 W
----- 022073

O 261455 Z MAR 73
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5789
INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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8. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT CAMP COUNSELOR ISSUE INITIALLY WAS IDENTIFIED BY ANYONE IN HIGH POSITION AS ONE WHICH COULD BE EXPLOITED. MILDNESS OF LETTER (IN SUBSTANCE AND TONE) WHICH LJUBLJANA STUDENTS SENT US TENDS BEAR THIS OUT. RATHER, IT SEEMS TO FIRST HAVE RECEIVED FOCUS WHEN IT WAS TAKEN UP WITHIN PARTY ORGANIZATION AT LJUBLJANA UNIVERSITY, THEN BY YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS, FIRST IN SLOVENIA AND THEN AT FEDERAL LEVEL AS TOOL USEFUL IN JOCKEYING FOR POSITION NOW IN PROCESS. SURPRISINGLY, IT TOOK SOME TIME FROM INITIAL PUBLICITY ABOUT ISSUE (MARCH 3 IN BORBA) BEFORE IT WAS RECOGNIZED AS HAVING POTENTIAL FOR BROADER EXPLOITATION. ONCE THAT NEXT STEP WAS TAKEN, THERE WAS CERTAIN INEVITABILITY ABOUT COURSE OF CAMPAIGN WHICH FOLLOWED.

9. DEGREE OF SPIRAL EFFECT WAS ALSO AT WORK IN PUBLICITY GIVEN CHARGES IN FRONT AGAINST VOA AND OTHER WESTERN MEDIA. FRONT IS POPULAR MILITARY MAGAZINE MEANT TO BE READ BY RANK AND FILE; IT IS AN INDOCTRINATION AND PROPAGANDA INSTRUMENT PURE AND SIMPLE. BUT IN PRESENT CLIMATE, AND WITH OPEN SEASON ON BAD THINGS WESTERN HAVING BEEN DECLARED BY TITO HIMSELF, ISSUES RAISED IN FRONT ARTICLE WERE JUST TOO JUICY NOT TO BE REITERATED IN POPULAR MEDIA - THERE WERE TOO MANY POINTS TO BE MADE BY DOING IT AND MANY POSSIBLY TO BE LOST BY FAILURE TO CONFIDENTIAL

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RECOGNIZE ITS " MERIT" AS AN ISSUE. OFFICIAL SPOKESMEN HAVE BACKED AWAY FROM VOA CHARGE, ANDLINE NOW IS THAT " CERTAIN" STATIONS IN U. S. PLACE THEIR FACILITIES AT DISPOSAL OF HOSTILE EMIGRE GROUPS.

10. LESS EASILY UNDERSTOOD IS INITIATIVE BY FOREIGN OFFICE TO REOPEN BOTH ISSUES AT ITS MARCH 22 PRESS CONFERENCE (REFTEL). ISSUANCE OF THIS PREPARED STATEMENT (IN RESPONSE TO PLANTED QUESTION) MUST HAVE RECEIVED POLITICAL SANCTION AT HIGH LEVEL. WE DO NOT SEE IT, HOWEVER, AS REFLECTING (AS SOME HAVE LOGICALLY SPECULATED) CONSCIOUS DECISION AT POLICY LEVEL (ON PART OF SUPPOSED " CONSERVATIVES") TO TAKE STEP DESIGNED TO DAMAGE US- YUGOSLAV BILATERAL RELATIONS. RATHER, HARSH NATURE OF STATEMENT, AND IMPLIED LINKING OF INTERVIEWS AND BROADCASTING WITH EMIGRE ACTIVITY, PROBABLY REPRESENTS PARTY DECISION WITH FONOFF YIELDING UNDER PRESSURE, TO MILK THIS INCIDENT AGAIN FOR MAXIMUM DOMESTIC IDEOLOGICAL EFFECT.

11. CURRENT CAMPAIGN AND OTHER SIMILAR CAMPAIGNS WHICH WE CAN EXPECT IN FUTURE ARE DISTURBING AND WE CANNOT IGNORE THEM. BUT WE BELIEVE THAT ANY REACTION ON OUR PART WHICH WOULD BE OF NATURE OR STRIDENCY CAUSING GOY TO FEEL ITSELF CONSTRAINED

IN TURN TO REJOIN WOULD ONLY PLAY INTO HANDS OF THOSE WHO
MIGHT WISH TO DAMAGE OUR RELATIONS. THUS, WIEST COURSE
WOULD BE MEASURED EXPRESSION OF REGRET, BUT COUPLED WITH
CLEAR INDICATION THAT CONTINUATION OF THIS KIND OF CAMPAIGN RUNS
HIGH RISK OF GENERATING REACTION IN US WHICH COULD WORK TO
SERIOUS DETRIMENT OF CONT

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BELGRA01263
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BELGRADE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730338/aaaaihkh.tel
Line Count: 228
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 BELGRADE 1227
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 09 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <15-Oct-2001 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971229
Subject: EMBASSY EVALUATION OF CURRENT PRESS CAMPAIGN
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, YO
To: EUR
SECSTATE WASHDC
USIA
ZAGREB
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005